**Using Transitions**

Transitions are words and phrases that help explain relationships between sentences; they help make a paragraph coherent. While transitions can help clarify the relationships between ideas, they cannot create those relationships. In other words, the logic of the paragraph must already exist in order for transitions to do their job.

**There are different ways of making an effective transition:**

1) Place a strong sentence at the end of the preceding paragraph.

The last sentence of some paragraphs in a critical essay or paper may act as a mini-conclusion to the paragraph. It may wrap up the thought or tie the information presented to your thesis. It may also act as a bridge to your next paragraph. Consider this example, from a paper in which a writer compares Americans' reactions to traveling to other parts of the country:

Many Westerners don't like rivers in the East. They are alarmed by the muddy water, the overhanging trees, and the snakes. Some Easterners aren't too thrilled about Western rivers, either.

Western rivers can seem shallow, freezing cold, too exposed to the sun, rocky, and uninviting to someone used to the gentle and fertile rivers of the East. Instead of a gentle float in a canoe, a Western "river run" can be a terrifying experience for the novice Easterner. . .

Note how the writer begins the transition at the end of the first paragraph and then continues the transition with a strong topic sentence in the next paragraph.

2) Make an allusion to the topic of the preceding paragraph.

You might refer to the main topic of your last paragraph. Read your topic sentence or gloss the paragraph to make sure you know its main thrust (see the Writer's Web handout on glossing).

Note, in the preceding example, how the second paragraph's topic sentence sets the reader up for the new topic (Western rivers) and also refers back to Eastern rivers. It is also possible to begin a transition in the second paragraph, like this:

Many Westerners don't like rivers in the East. They are alarmed by the muddy water, the overhanging trees, and the snakes. Westerners often won't stick their big toes in rivers that look like the James.

To Easterners, on the other hand, Western rivers can seem shallow, freezing cold, too exposed to the sun, rocky, and uninviting. . .

In this example, the final sentence of the first paragraph serves as that "mini- conclusion" discussed above.

**Note**: Whatever type of transition you use, you should clearly present the topic of the paragraph that follows. For more information, see [Writing Paragraphs](http://writing2.richmond.edu/writing/wweb/paragrph.html).

One way to check your transitions is to read through your paper while paying close attention to the last and first sentences in every paragraph. Do these sentences provide a basic outline of the information you cover in your paper?

**Transitional Words and Phrases**  
Updated lists by Joanna Taraba

This page only provides a list of transitional words; be certain you understand their meanings before you use them. Often, there exists a slight, but significant, difference between two apparently similar words. Also remember that while transitions describe relationships between ideas, they do not automatically create relationships between ideas for your reader. Use transitions with enough context in a sentence or paragraph to make the relationships clear.

Example of unclear transition:

The characters in Book A face a moral dilemma. In the same way, the characters in Book B face a similar problem.

Improved transition:

The characters in Book A face a moral dilemma, a contested inheritance. Although the inheritance in Book B consists of an old house and not a pile of money, the nature of the problem is quite similar.

**Examples of Transitions:**

Illustration

Thus, for example, for instance, namely, to illustrate, in other words, in particular, specifically, such as.

Contrast

On the contrary, contrarily, notwithstanding, but, however, nevertheless, in spite of, in contrast, yet, on one hand, on the other hand, rather, or, nor, conversely, at the same time, while this may be true.

Addition

And, in addition to, furthermore, moreover, besides, than, too, also, both-and, another, equally important, first, second, etc., again, further, last, finally, not only-but also, as well as, in the second place, next, likewise, similarly, in fact, as a result, consequently, in the same way, for example, for instance, however, thus, therefore, otherwise.

Time

After, afterward, before, then, once, next, last, at last, at length, first, second, etc., at first, formerly, rarely, usually, another, finally, soon, meanwhile, at the same time, for a minute, hour, day, etc., during the morning, day, week, etc., most important, later, ordinarily, to begin with, afterwards, generally, in order to, subsequently, previously, in the meantime, immediately, eventually, concurrently, simultaneously.

Space

At the left, at the right, in the center, on the side, along the edge, on top, below, beneath, under, around, above, over, straight ahead, at the top, at the bottom, surrounding, opposite, at the rear, at the front, in front of, beside, behind, next to, nearby, in the distance, beyond, in the forefront, in the foreground, within sight, out of sight, across, under, nearer, adjacent, in the background.

Concession

Although, at any rate, at least, still, thought, even though, granted that, while it may be true, in spite of, of course.

Similarity Or Comparison

Similarly, likewise, in like fashion, in like manner, analogous to.

Emphasis

Above all, indeed, truly, of course, certainly, surely, in fact, really, in truth, again, besides, also, furthermore, in addition.

Details

Specifically, especially, in particular, to explain, to list, to enumerate, in detail, namely, including.

Examples

For example, for instance, to illustrate, thus, in other words, as an illustration, in particular.

Consequence or Result

So that, with the result that, thus, consequently, hence, accordingly, for this reason, therefore, so, because, since, due to, as a result, in other words, then.

Summary

Therefore, finally, consequently, thus, in short, in conclusion, in brief, as a result, accordingly.

Suggestion

For this purpose, to this end, with this in mind, with this purpose in mind, therefore.

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